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Talleres de Habla Creativa para la Mejora de la Expresión Oral

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**Trabajo de Fin de Máster**

# **Improving Speaking Skills through Creative Speaking Workshops**

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# **Improving Speaking Skills through Creative Speaking Workshops**

## **Abstract**

Creative writing workshops are extensively used nowadays in EFL education. The main aim of this tool is to improve students' writing skills by encouraging them to work creatively and participate actively in the class. The objective of this project is to design creative speaking workshops blending some of the principles of creative writing together with certain innovative methodologies. In this way, we seek to create a positive work-flow environment and design activities that are both motivating and useful for the students. Our aim is increase students use of the language in the class obtaining consequently an improvement in their speaking and communicative skills. Our project is focused on the fourth year of Secondary Education given that at this level students' creative capacity is not usually included in the classroom and that students have sufficient knowledge to be able to communicate effectively.

## **Resumen**

Los talleres de escritura creativa son una herramienta en la que mediante el uso de diferentes actividades se busca motivar a los alumnos a trabajar de forma creativa para mejorar su producción escrita. El objetivo de este proyecto es aplicar algunos de los principios en los que se basan estos talleres junto con metodologías novedosas para diseñar talleres de producción oral creativa. De este modo, buscamos crear un ambiente de trabajo positivo y con actividades que resulten motivadoras para los estudiantes con el objetivo de que, a través de la práctica frecuente, su capacidad de comunicación y expresión se vean incrementadas. Hemos decidido centrar nuestro proyecto en el cuarto curso de Educación Secundaria dado que a este nivel la capacidad creativa de los alumnos no suele trabajarse en el aula y además los alumnos poseen conocimientos suficientes para poder comunicarse de manera efectiva.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, we live in a multicultural and ever-changing world in which new discoveries are constantly re-shaping the future. The labour market is thus constantly changing and it is difficult to predict the future needs of our learners (Wisniewska, 2017). They have to be prepared for the interconnected world in which we currently live. As it is stated by Renandiya and Puji Widodo (2016), many of the 21<sup>st</sup> century educating needs have already been identified. Such education promotes lifelong learning and abilities that the students will need to survive in new economic scenarios; which means that they have to learn flexibly, adaptively, innovatively, collaboratively, informally, and ubiquitously (Li, Yuen and Wong, 2018). Besides, we ought not to forget that nowadays English could be considered as the *lingua franca* that enables communication among people with different first languages, regardless of whether one of them is an English-native speaker or not.

In order to meet those requirements, new pedagogies are merging and innovations in education are being proposed. There is a great need to create new learning environments for students to learn and develop certain skills during their educational stage that will transform them into citizens of our world. However, innovative teaching occurs not because the approaches are new, but because teachers have the courage to think creatively and to initiate or extend teaching strategies that are outside the box in their context (Burns and Siegel, 2018).

With this purpose, English as a Foreign Language teachers should not only focus on teaching the four skills into which language is traditionally divided (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking), but also on other important values and competences that foster students' integral growth.

It is important to bear in mind that it is not equally difficult to master each one of the skills and that, as a rule, the productive skills are more problematic. Hence, we have designed an innovation project for improving students' oral expression by means of the use of some creative writing principles. Through this kind of activities students become more confident on their use of the language and, consequently, their fluency and general performance improve. At the same time, they boost their creativity and their Communicative Competence (including their Intercultural Communicative Competence). All this results in well-prepared

students that are able to use English in their daily life to achieve their goals.

Our project is based on the role and importance that creativity has already been given on improving writing skills. Many teachers and researchers have upgraded students' performance by means of creative writing workshops, in which students are encouraged to practice in a stress-free environment. Applying the same principles on creative speaking workshops, our aim is to obtain similar results. Furthermore, we expect to improve the outcomes as speech acts are, as a rule, more spontaneous.

As mentioned above, the project consists of different creative speaking workshops that will be conducted throughout the academic year. The activities have been designed bearing in mind the Spanish Educational Law (LOMCE) and the Decree that establishes the curriculum in Secondary Education in La Rioja in order to deal with the objectives, competences and contents required.

The theoretical framework of the project establishes the basis that have been taken into consideration for its creation. First of all, we have carried out a research on how creativity can be used to improve students' productive skills, including findings and experiences from professionals. Then, we have explored two concepts that we consider that could enrich our educational proposal: Intercultural Communicative Competence and Willingness to Communicate. Both of them are taken into consideration during the development of the project as they will increase the learning outcomes. Finally, we have provided some theoretical notions regarding the approaches that have been used when designing the project: Communicative Competence, Flipped Learning, and Gamification.

The next section is focused on the innovative project and includes information on its objectives, contents, participants, methodology, and timing among other aspects. Despite their actual skills, students make use of all the strategies available to them and engage on the class on a purposeful manner. After all, we consider that 'practice makes perfect' and therefore students need to make use of language before achieving a certain grade of expertise. Fluency and accuracy will follow naturally.

The final part of the project includes a discussion on the topic and the final conclusions that we have drawn, in order to evaluate its potential use and effectiveness.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

This section explains the reasons that have led us to the development of this project and the main objectives that we aim to tackle during its development. We have decided to start by quoting Widdowson as we have found extremely shocking the fact that the problem he exposed forty years ago is still somehow present in our education today:

The problem is that students, and specially students in developing countries, who have received several years of formal English teaching, frequently remain deficient in the ability to actually use the language, and to understand its use, in normal communication, whether in the spoken or the written mode. (Widdowson, 1979: 117)

Thinking that the situation and problems that he was trying to solve have barely changed would be not only extremely pessimistic but also not realistic, as teaching methodologies, practices, and resources have been re-imagined and redesigned. The Communicative Approach, what Widdowson was defending when he stated these words, is only one of the many examples that could be used to cite such enhancements.

However, despite all the efforts that have been made, we still find cases in which students study English as a Foreign Language for no less than ten years and still are not independent users of the language. It is common to observe that these students can usually understand texts, whether written or orally, at an intermediate level of difficulty, but that they do not possess the necessary tools to express themselves. Bearing in mind the many resources that can be used nowadays, we consider that, although producing a good text is still difficult, this task has become considerably easier. Maintaining a conversation on the contrary is more direct, spontaneous and unplanned and for these reasons it is still problematic for the students. Although nowadays we have new means of communication, they will never substitute traditional face-to-face acts of speech. Precisely for this reason, we need to identify and tackle possible sources of difficulties for our students and provide them with the skills and trust on themselves to face those challenges.

Besides, Speaking is one of the skills that traditionally has received less attention in EFL classrooms. Sometimes, teachers tend to prioritize finishing the



course book and speaking activities are not given that much attention (Khameis, 2006). The focus is placed on teaching the grammatical structures, vocabulary and practising written translation. In addition, students from non-English speaking backgrounds usually lack of opportunities to communicate using English so that they can practice. Teachers should take into consideration these teaching needs to be active and interactive. Learning does not occur just by listening, but through deeds, thoughts and actions (Gabrys-Barker, 2017). Therefore, for the students to achieve a certain mastery on their oral production, it is necessary for them to speak and participate frequently on the class.

We consider education to be an ongoing improvement process. Teachers and other professionals should work together on analysing, planning, programming and implementing improvements on the teaching-learning process. Hence, the present study pretends to be one of those necessary steps on the improvement process hereby mentioned. We have designed an innovation project that is focused mainly on improving students' speaking skills.

We are concerned that, of course, when a certain improvement is obtained, the students' overall competence on the language will get better. However, it is true that better and more in-depth results can be obtained if the attention is focused on improving one skill at a time. From the four major skills we have decided to centre our project on the speaking, as we perceive that is one of the most problematic nowadays. Quite frequently students are able to understand and even use at a certain level English structures appropriately but they lack the capacity to orally express themselves.

Against this background, the main objective is to develop students' oral skills through creative speaking workshops. In addition, we not only seek to improve their ability to use the language orally, but also their Communicative Competence. Other secondary objectives that have been taken into consideration within the project are:

- Reinforce students' confidence on their skills and use of the language, avoiding negative feeling such as pressure, anxiety and lack of motivation. Students are embarked on a learning process and therefore should not be afraid of making mistakes, they should be regarded as opportunities for learning.

- Increase their Willingness to Communicate through innovative practices such as new methodologies that are expected to awake students interest and increase their participation
- Motivate class participation as a certain improvement is only achieved though frequent and constant practice. Students need to use the language actively in order to be able to perform better.
- Develop their creativity. Students are expected to reach imaginative outcomes though their use of the language. Creative thinking should be included in education, as it is a skill that can benefit students throughout their life.
- Create a positive, cooperative and workflow environment, so that the students work, collaborate and help each other. Criticism is only included if the aim is to provide positive and constructive feedback.
- Improve students' interpersonal relationships working collaboratively as well as fun manner. Students share information about themselves so that they can get to know each other better and positive social relationships are worked on.
- Promote a sense of self-assessment in the students. At all times they are aware of the principles used for designing the project and the parameters used for its evaluation. Besides, at certain moments, students are able to take control on the design of the class by creating materials or taking decisions.
- Promote students' role not only as consumers but also as authors of high-quality online materials. Students work with formats they find interesting and appealing and learn how to produce and reproduce them.



### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section includes an overview of the theoretical aspects that have been taken into consideration when designing the present innovative project.

Firstly, we will explore the state of the matter regarding the uses and effects of creativity on students' productive skills. We will include theoretical and practical notions both from the creative written and oral production. We have used creative writing proposals as the theoretical basis for the project and we have conducted a review about this type of activities. They are a much more common practise nowadays and many professionals on the field have shared the benefits of its use. As for the creative speaking, it is our main focus since we believe on its great potential. However, we must admit that the topic has yet to be further explored and not much information is available.

Secondly, we will look into students' Willingness to Communicate; including its effects and how to boost it. We think that the impact it can have on the speaking skill is immense and should be taken into consideration when regarding its improvement.

Thirdly, we will include a general overview on the Intercultural Communicative Competence as it is important for the students to understand the impact that language has on communicating ideas and concepts.

Last but not least, the main methodological approaches that are used in this innovation project are explored on the fourth part of this section. We have chosen to blend three approaches in order to maximise the expected results of this project: Communicative Approach, Flipped Learning, and Gamification.

#### **3.1 The effects of Creativity on Students' Productive Skills**

As it has been already mentioned, it is important for teachers to reflect on how their instructional practices can be improved. Teachers should observe and reflect upon their practices in order to be able to design activities that are both enjoyable and fruitful for the students. On this project, we are going to conduct a research on the role that creativity can play in the EFL classroom and how it can be used to improve the learning outcomes.

Creativity can be regarded from two points of view, as Bayat (2015) states; some consider that it is innate, and some people are naturally more ingenious

and visionary than others. On the other hand, others believe that creativity is merely a skill and therefore it is possessed by everyone and it can be improved and revealed. From our point of view, we agree with the author on both perspectives. Although we consider to be true that some people are born with a greater ability to think creatively, it is also true that creativity sometimes can (or needs to) be unlocked. It is a crucial part of the teaching profession to help students think and explore their own ideas, regardless the approach to creativity that is considered as more appropriate. Bayat proposes five traits that can be worked and used to promote creativity:

- 1) Thinking differently
- 2) Delaying judgment
- 3) Thinking flexibly
- 4) Spontaneity
- 5) Synthesizing

We intend to use these five traits as a basis for designing our project, as they could potentiate students' originality and inventiveness. Besides, we also agree with Hodson (2006) when he states that creativity is a critical element that should be used in fostering ability. If students are not motivated, challenged and encouraged to participate during their learning process, their full potential is unused. The use of creativity on the EFL classroom involves working imaginatively to solve problems that transcend curriculum subjects (Hodson, 2006). It has the power to connect and engage students so that they work actively and foster their skills.

On the following sections, we are going to conduct an investigation on how it has been used to foster the productive skills. As we have already mentioned, the main goal of the project is to improve students' oral production. However, as the matter is not that developed yet, we will also bear in mind other creative writing books and activities to complement our theoretical basis.

### *3.1.1 Creative Writing*

We have conducted an analysis on different books and articles that have creative writing as their main topic. Some of the findings that have been already put into practise regarding this skill could be of great interest if they were to be

applied on working creatively students' oral production. Hence, we have selected and included on this section the ones that we consider to be more appealing for oral communication.

Hadfield and Hadfield (1990) state that writing can be an enjoyable and satisfying activity for teachers and students to develop together on an EFL classroom, although it is often seen by students as hard work, boring and unrewarding. Similarly, students frequently see speaking as an unappealing activity in which they are forced to participate despite their lack of motivation or skills. We consider that, regarding both abilities, its success will depend on how the activities are designed and posed to the students. If the activities are well-designed, presented to the students on an appealing manner and their purpose is clear, students will feel motivated to participate and their learning outcomes will be richer.

These authors have compiled a collection of a wide variety of games and activities that teachers can use to practice written production with their students. Their aim is not to propose a system that can be used to enhance students' skill, but to offer different practices that teachers could implement on their classes and tips for enhancing their practices. We have considered many ideas to be very useful. For instance, they propose that in order to get away from the 'homework syndrome' (and its negative effects) it is important to include certain versatility in the class. Changing the materials in which the students have to work is one of the techniques that they propose, enhancing therefore divergent thinking.

Besides, the authors propose that writing is indeed hard to master as three levels of difficulty can be found on the skill. The first one is the psychological difficulty, as the learners have to decide what information could be interesting for the potential reader. Secondly, there is a linguistic difficulty, as they have to use the language properly respecting conventions and rules. Thirdly, students will find a cognitive difficulty, as they need to decide how to organise thoughts and state their arguments (bearing in mind who the receiver is, what are they communicating, why, and how). Regarding the speaking, students will find similar difficulties. However, from our point of view, they will have to make even a greater effort to overcome the linguistic difficulties as they do not have enough time to prepare the speech acts.

Singleton is another author that should be noted regarding creative writing. He stresses the importance of encouraging new writers into daring to be different, as it is a product both of the imagination and of reflective thinking. Singleton (1996) believes that imagination drives writing and that it is most effective when harnessed to craft. For this reason constant practice is required to obtain a certain improvement, but it should be combined with suggestions and innovative ideas in order to step away from prefabricated writing. We do agree with Singleton's idea that new writers (and speakers) flourish best in a group context where there is an open and anxiety-free exchange of ideas for and about the process. Their minds will be oxygenated and the flow of ideas, together with an improvement on their performance, will be obtained. Students have at their disposal the elements that they need to produce written and oral messages (words and structures), so it is the instructor's responsibility to guide them through their improvement process.

Singleton (2001) establishes the guiding principles that were taken into consideration for designing his books and that we consider that could be of great use for the project:

- As Socrates said, an unexamined life is not worth living. In this sense, we find value and worth in human behaviour by reflecting about it.
- Writing is about vision and re-vision. It is about examining one's own precepts and concepts under a sceptical light. Imagination is the way to see into things and the truths that elude our rational grasp. Imagination has to question, challenge, conceive alternatives, and play around with notions.
- Practice makes perfect. In order to become a good writer, you have make yourself one.
- The importance of craft in the writing process. Both craft and technique should be stressed, however they should merely be used as servants of content and purpose
- Good readers make good writers. New writers are encouraged to read and to keep on reading. Though this process writers obtain their feedstock: Words.

Last but not least, we would like to include in this section the work of Coto (2002). His book could be considered as masterpiece on the topic. He introduces

an extensive theory, including a review of what has been previously done in different countries, and a practical part with lots of activities for teachers to implement on their sessions. He considers that students must be instructed in the know-how to use the words and to communicate. Humans are narrative animals and, though communication, we tell each other our life experiences. What is more, he states that reality could also be seen as only one of the many possible manners to report what has happened, to build our identity and culture. Therefore, teachers need to be able to inculcate on student the pleasure of telling stories, to express their thoughts and even to sometimes add a bit of imagination in order to create worth telling stories.

For this reason, according to the author, it is recommended to start working from concrete to abstract. Students should practice first with topics they can relate to and that are meaningful for them, increasing afterwards the difficulty progressively. The classroom could be transformed into a 'laboratory' in which students can experiment with language and its different uses, getting to know in the meanwhile the wide heterogeneity that can be expressed through it. The tasks therefore should be evaluated bearing in mind those differences. Each student possesses a different starting point and will improve on different aspects.

### *3.1.2 Creative Speaking*

The use of Creative Speaking activities is still nowadays quite an innovative practice. It has been used and studied by several authors, but not much information on the matter is available. In this section, we will compile some of the practices and information that we have considered to be most noteworthy and that we have used as an inspiration for the project.

Firstly, we agree with Mrozek (2009) when he states that the teacher cannot teach effectively without the initiative and creativity of the learner. Therefore, the main objective is to increase the learners' motivation and willingness to communicate through the use of Creative Speaking Workshops.

Khameis (2006) addresses how to use different activities creatively in order to promote speaking skills in the EFL classroom. The author considers that EFL learners might find difficulties such as the limited language use in their real lives or certain affective factors. Therefore, the teacher should include attractive



activities and strategies to make the students interested in the lesson. Students should be encouraged to speak as much as possible and to use language for social interaction. The focus should be placed on meaning and value rather than in correctness. She proposes the use of songs, poems, chants, drama, stories, and games to bring enjoyment and fun into the classroom. She conducted an investigation in a Turkish Primary School in which all the students were female and Arab was their first language. The teaching strategy was to create songs that were based on the contents of the unit and that were used as warming up activities. In addition, students used puppets to practice with dialogues they had to create and then present to their classmates. As a conclusion, Khameis (2006) states that the implementation of this strategies, although limited, was successful. The impact on students' spoken production was positive and their confidence and speaking skills increased.

The model proposed by Becker and Roos (2016) is considerably interesting. Although their focus is also placed on Primary Education learners, some implications could be transferred to higher levels. The authors state that opportunities for young learners to experiment with the language and use it productively are scarce. They usually practice with fixed dialogues or chunks of language, using only the language on an imitative manner. However, in order to progress in their acquisition of the target language and to become truly communicatively competent, learners also need to be able to use language spontaneously and creatively. In order to deal with that problem, they propose a model that includes communicative tasks and improvisation activities organised in three levels: reproductive language use, creative language use, and creative and productive language use. The main goal is to gradually challenge learners to use the individual linguistic repertoire available to them in a meaningful context.

Avila (2015), by the means of action research, has attempted to plan, implement and evaluate the use of creative activities on the EFL. He has successfully conducted different activities aimed at improving different skills in a Colombian private English-teaching institute. Although at first students were reluctant to participate, the methods worked positively and were presented as a challenge for them. Some of the activities consisted of chain games, in which the difficulty was progressively upgraded and the students had to work collaboratively

in order to produce a final fictional story or oral text, thus sharing their knowledge and boosting their skills. Other activities were designed so that students would share with the class aspects of their lives, as they feel more comfortable talking about things that are meaningful and significant for them. The exercises were designed to let students speak using their own focus and direction, developing their ideas and descriptions, discovering their voices, and applying grammar rules in a fun manner. Participants were given the opportunity to develop their creativity and to use their knowledge and skills.

We have considered certain ideas regarding the speaking skill to be of great and with a great potential for the design of our project. All in all, although little research has been conducted on this topic, the ideas proposed by these authors will help to design an effective model to our project.

### **3.2 Exploring Willingness to Communicate**

This section deals with the notion of Willingness to Communicate, as it is of utmost importance for the development of the speaking skill in a foreign language. The term could be defined as the learner's readiness to participate in communicative acts at a particular time with a specific person and not using his/her own language (MacIntyre et al 1998: 547). In other words, it is a positive predisposition towards oral production while learning, practicing or using a foreign language.

Since language and communicative skills are acquired mostly through practice, students' Willingness to Communicate will have a huge impact on the process. If students, for whatever reason, do not want to participate in the class and practise as little as possible, they would never become effective communicators in the foreign language they are learning. For this reason, and bearing in mind that learning occurs by students' active performance, it is important to boost their participation.

Given its importance and its influence on the development, many researches and linguists have discussed on the topic. Regarding what produces Unwillingness to Communicate, it is widely accepted that it is a multi-factorial notion. Elements such as the student's personality (shyness, introversion, anxiety, lack of self-esteem), his/her feelings at the specific moment, and the

context in which communication is to be held have an influence on these situations (Mortensen, Arnston and Lustig (1977). Depending on the situation, “those who enjoy communication with some receivers may not be so willing to share their thoughts with others” (Galajda, 2017: 30). McCreoskey and Richmond (1985) state that when a person intends to establish communication with another one s/he may find some limitations depending on variables such as how the person is feeling that day, the communication the person has had with others, who the person is, how it looks like, the purpose, etc. Even age and gender could have an influence.

Choosing whether to communicate or not is a cognitive and affective choice and sometimes it depends more on the speaker’s self-perception than on their actual skills (Galagda, 2017). It is common to find that students lack of trust on their own abilities and avoid participating because they believe that what they are going to say is wrong. The fear of making mistakes is very frequent and will make the communicative acts scarce and even of lower quality (less fluency, avoiding the use of complex words, using only basic structures ...). Instead, students should understand that it should be in this environment, in the classroom, where they have to forget about their lack of confidence and dare to experiment with the language. After all, they are in a process of improvement and learning and if they do not participate in, it correctness will not be achieved.

In conclusion, these aspects that have such a great impact on the students’ Communicative Competence will be taken into consideration when designing the present project. Our main objective is to create a relaxed and workflow atmosphere in which students are willing to express themselves and use the language actively regardless their actual skills.

### **3.3 Improving Students’ Intercultural Communicative Competence**

In recent times, Europe and the European Commission are shifting their approach to the teaching and learning process towards a more comprehensive model. The objective is to include a set of skills and competences on education that will provide a lifelong learning and know-how to the citizens. This will allow people to grow as a person and to fulfil their whole potential as citizens. The Council of Europe (2016:10) defines the term competence as “the ability to

mobilise and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges, and opportunities that are presented by a given type of context.” Key competences and basic skills are required for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship. They include a wide range of aspects of different natures that all should develop from an early age and throughout life.

By not including these cultural and behavioural aspects in the language class we are undermining some of the resources available to make our students not only adequate communicators but truly effective ones. Moreover, students must be aware of everything that they can communicate nonverbally depending on their gestures, body language and paralinguistics among other aspects. Those aspects are the ones that truly have an impact on the listener and should be taken into consideration as their meaning can change from one culture to another (Bucket, 1999). Besides, as the author states, when the students receive this type of training they will become more effective communicators not only while using foreign languages but in all aspects of their lives.

In Spain, the Spanish Educational Law (LOMCE) poses seven Key Competences as the ones that the students must work, develop and acquire throughout their academic instruction. The Key Competences established by the European Commission, although being quite similar, places a greater emphasis on the importance of the intercultural communication.

M. F. Teng (2018: 115) defines Intercultural Communicative Competence as:

“[...] the ability for the students to communicate effectively and appropriately on some basic cultural issues with people of other cultures. To that end, they need to understand some basic rules or norms related to cultural issues and try to contemplate how to apply their theoretical know-how about specific cultural differences to everyday life in another culture.”

It could be said that culture has usually been included in the Foreign Language classroom. Culture and language are strongly interrelated, as language is “the primary vehicle by which a culture transmits its beliefs, values and more” (Sun, 2013: 371). Besides, as the author underlines, it would be quite difficult for one

to exist and flourish without the other.

However, interculturality goes beyond understanding linguistic and cultural diversity; it includes the ability to critically reflect on one's own cultural assumptions and deal with the different cultures within a multilingual perspective (Orisini-Jones and Lee, 2018). These authors believe that educators, especially in Higher Education, must prepare students for effective interaction and explore the linguistic components of Intercultural Communicative Competence for global citizenship, including the development of students' critical digital literacy.

Byram (2000) proposed five elements that composed Intercultural Communicative Competence:

- Attitudes: such as curiosity, openness, or ready to reflect on other cultures and one's own.
- Knowledge: of different social groups and their customs
- Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to understand a document or event from other cultures and relate it to a similar one from one's own
- Skill of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and operate with it
- Critical cultural awareness: ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices and products from one's own or other cultures.

According to the reasons above mentioned, we have considered that it would be extremely positive to start introducing this competence during Secondary Education. It could be a great opportunity so that the students acquire at least a certain basis regarding this know-how. Besides, bearing in mind that nowadays Internet and the Social Media are widely used by our youngest population, it is of utmost importance to provide them the necessary tools to make an adequate use of them.

### **3.4 EFL Approaches used as the Basis for the Workshops**

Among the many diverse approaches regarding EFL teaching, we have selected three for the purpose of this project. They have been chosen for various reasons, including efficacy, relevance and/or novelty. It must be highlighted that, the courses in which these workshops are to be implemented can blend the approaches we have used with others that suit their overall objectives.

### 3.4.1 Communicative Approach

The Communicative Approach is a teaching approach based on the idea that it is necessary for students to be involved in real communication so that they can effectively learn a language. In this way, they will acquire the necessary strategies and know how to use them in real-life situation.

The origin of the Communicative Approach dates back to the 70's when teachers became aware that the language instruction then provided often failed to enable students to communicate appropriately (Hummel, 2014). It was originally conceived by teachers and linguists in North America and rapidly spread elsewhere, being nowadays of utmost relevance. The Communicative Approach was proposed as a method to redesign the ways languages, and especially foreign languages, were being taught.

Formerly, there was a clear focus on teaching Linguistic Competence thus leaving Communicative Competence aside. The emphasis was placed on the teaching of language structure prevailing over language use. Structural correctness and the ability to manipulate the structures of language were rewarded, not giving that much attention to the functional level of language.

Linguists and teachers, influenced by theories that emphasized the learner's cognitive abilities, increasingly recognized the need to teach languages in ways that allowed learners to communicate meaning, rather than memorize structures and rules (Hummel, 2014). Brumfit and Johnson (1979: 3) defined the approach as "a reaction against the view of language as a set of structures; it is a reaction towards a view of language as communication, a view in which meaning and the uses to which language is put play a central part."

This new approach recognized that the acquisition of receptive and productive knowledge of a language must involve the learning of rules of use as well as rules of grammar (Brumfit and Johnson, 1979). The model was designed bearing in mind the theory of communication previously proposed by Hymes (1971). It integrated four rules of speech in order to make communication effective:

- Whether (and to what degree) something is formally *possible*;
- Whether (and to what degree) something is *feasible* in virtue of the means of implementation available;
- Whether (and to what degree) something is *appropriate* in relation to a

context in which it is used and evaluated;

- Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, *performed*, and what it entails.

In order to form efficient communicators, instruction cannot focus solely on how to compose possible sentences. The rest of aspects must be equally taken into consideration, as “Communication only takes place when we make use of sentences to perform a variety of different acts of an essentially social nature” (Widdowson, 1979: 118). When teaching a language we should think in terms of communicative acts, bearing in mind the different values that linguistic structures might have.

A shift in the pattern procedure was proposed, moving away from more traditional language courses in which structures are presented and taught to the students, then they drill them, and afterwards they practise in context with them. Now, the sessions were redesigned and reprogrammed in order to create a need in the students to use the structures. They are asked to communicate as far as possible with all the available resources and only afterwards the language items shown to be necessary for effective communication are presented to them. Students can drill if necessary. Therefore:

A communicative methodology, then, would start from communication, with exercises which constituted communication challenges for students. As they attempted the exercises, students would have to stretch their linguistic capabilities to perform the given tasks, and would be given tasks, and would be given subsequent teaching, which could be of a traditional form, where they clearly perceived themselves to need to improve to establish communication adequately in relation to the task (Brumfit, 1979, p.188-189).

According to Hummel (2014) and Sánchez Reyes (2011), some of the main features that define Communicative Language Teaching are:

- Instruction is oriented on the components of Communicative Competence and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic notions.
- The aim is to design a pragmatic, authentic, and functional use of language for meaningful purposes.
- Fluency and accuracy are complementary; maintaining learners

meaningfully engaged in language use is preferred.

- Students are expected to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.
- Teachers become facilitators of students' learning; talking less and listening more.
- The evaluation is redesigned into a process rather than a product evaluation.
- The classroom becomes more learner-centred. Learners behave more autonomously and are encouraged to become involved at all the stages in their learning process (Colwell, 1999).

Currently, this approach has been extensively accepted and its merits have been widely recognised by students and professionals. Allwright (1979), who could be considered a pioneer, affirmed that it 'felt right' both in day-to-day work with learners and on afterwards reflection. However, still nowadays it is not considered to be perfect and it has some detractors. Some of the arguments against it include that the time and effort invested are not always reflected in the proficiency levels attained or that learners' needs and expectations are not always used as the bases for the general course aims (Colwell, 1999).

At the same time, it is necessary to recognise that teaching EFL within a Communicative Approach is complex and should be carefully planned beforehand in order to obtain satisfactory results. Firstly, it is important to avoid confusing students' participation with learning to communicate. They are not synonymous and certain adjustments are necessary. For instance, the focus should be laid on the structure of a certain dialogue or on its potential as a communicative operation rather than on the forms that appear on it. Learners need to know how to actually use the language and how its use may vary depending on the circumstances.

However, from our point of view, the extra effort is worth and for our project some of the considerations on this approach could bring abundant benefits.

### *3.4.2 Flipped Learning*

The flipped classroom is a popular trend in education nowadays that flips the traditional format of a classroom. It proposes a model in which students are



introduced to new contents outside and before the scheduled class time and, therefore, class time is available so that students can work on collaborative activities and teachers can assess them and provide suitable feedback. At-home materials are designed with the purpose of better preparing students for the session, assessing students' engagement and understanding, and guiding the direction and tone of the later session (Brown, 2018). The activities that are conventionally regarded as homework are rescheduled to take place during class-time and if any difficulty arises when the students are working actively with the concepts (or if the theory has not been understood adequately) the teacher can immediately provide corrective feedback. This model not only changes the teaching methods, but also students' perception and the teacher's role in the classroom (Mehring, 2018). The teacher becomes a mediator or guide and adopts a more passive role; therefore, students' learning is more active and experiential.

The model was created by Bermann and Sams, two chemistry teachers that taught at a High School in the USA, when they realized that, sometimes, students could not attend to their classes and started to promote video recorded lessons. Over time, they realized of the many benefits that the model could provide and started to promote it. In our country, *The Flipped Classroom Project* ([www.theflippedclassroom.es](http://www.theflippedclassroom.es)) promotes the model sharing with other teachers plenty of flipped experiences, materials and resources. Raul Santiago, professor at Universidad de La Rioja, is one of the main editors of the website and pioneer on implementing the model in Spain.

Technology provides a lot of new possibilities that can highly enrich the EFL classroom. However, as Mehring (2018) states, it is important to stress that technology is not required for flipping a class. The flipped classroom is usually associated with videos, but the main focus of flipping should be creating a student-centred learning environment that could be obtained throughout other materials.

Well-designed flipped classes provide students opportunities to interact with classmates and the instructor, leading therefore to a more communicative classroom. Students become the centre of the class and they learn by doing, using and building their skills. However, some obstacles may appear during the

flipped classroom. For instance, students might feel that the workload and/or the difficulty have increased or they may not give the pre-class materials enough attention. However, such problems can be solved if the instructor designs the session carefully and implements it progressively, giving attention to students' participation.

Teng (2018) focuses on the potential that this methodology has in improving students' speaking skills. He states that, through the use of this model, students' results remarkably improve in comparison with other classes taught more traditionally. He proposes three main possible reasons for such improvement: as direct instruction is provided outside the class there is more room for engaging students in communicative activities, the learner has a greater control of the process and is able to participate more in the class, and the students' needs are easily met since they can decide when, how and at what pace to work with their at-home materials.

### *3.4.3 Gamification*

The term Gamification is used to describe an innovative approach that uses game mechanisms and elements in a non-gaming context in order to give it a game-like feel (Deterding et al. 2011). It is an interdisciplinary approach whose main objective is to motivate users thus increasing its engagement, enjoyment and also loyalty. It can be used in many different fields such as economics, online services, the digital media industry, and, of course, education. Psychological studies have shown that enhancing information systems with game elements resulted in a significant positive impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the people using them (Matallaoui, Hanner, and Zarnekow, 2017). Gamification can lead to a change in users' behaviour without resorting to extrinsic incentives. Certain latent factors such as joy, ease of use, workflow, and perceived usefulness can directly be improved. However, Gamification only uses gaming elements partly and other aspects (such as the educational background) remain unaltered (Matallaoui, Hanner, and Zarnekow, 2017).

According to Caillois (1961) gaming represents a rule-based and goal-oriented form of playing and it should be presented as a voluntary and enjoyable activity. McGonigal (2011) established the four basic characteristics for an activity to be

considered a game: clearly defined goals in order to provide a reason for playing, consistently defined rules representing the limitations and boundaries, steady feedback in order to guarantee that the players are able to reach the goal, and free will of accepting participation in the game. When 'gamifying' an activity certain game mechanics such as points, leader boards, or rewards should be included.

All in all, to get the most out of Gamification other aspects such as the behaviour of the individuals or their cultural context need to be taken into consideration (AlMarshedi et al, 2017). One of Gamification main goals is to influence users' behaviour, so it is important to consider certain psychological factors. According to Fogg (2009) and its FBM model, three elements would have a certain impact on behaviour: motivation, ability and trigger. Motivation should be both intrinsic and extrinsic and used to keep students interested in the activity. It should be noted too that other aspects such as the personal capabilities, the social context, and the cultural dimension may also have an impact on the user. By taking into consideration these aspects, the impact of Gamification could potentially be enhanced (AlMarshedi et al, 2017).

Regarding education, some of the benefits that Gamification can bring include: increase students' engagement and motivation, enhance learning performance and academic achievement, improve retention, catalyse behavioural changes and promote collaboration skills, among others (Kim et al, 2018).

## **4. INNOVATION PROJECT PROPOSAL**

### **4.1 Justification**

As we have already mentioned in previous sections, our purpose is to design an educational innovation project focused on the improvement and development of students' oral expression. In the current scenario, and in spite of the great improvements that have been already attained, we still observe that students find great difficulties when it comes to express themselves. Solving this problem is of vital importance as it is a key competence for the personal and professional development of the citizens of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Many times, despite knowing a large amount of vocabulary and being able to handle at a greater or lesser extent complex grammatical structures, we find that students are not able to express their own ideas orally or show some reluctance to do so. It is a multifactorial problem that we have the obligation to solve, we must improve and obtain better results. On the one hand, in relation to the teaching planning, we must move away from too academic or traditional approaches. It is important to avoid classes that students might find tedious and repetitive, since their attention will be dissipated. In addition, they should be designed in a way that they result motivating and attractive for students. On the other hand, regarding the personal characteristics of the students, it is necessary to work with them so that factors such as the fear of lack of correctness, shame or other aspects make them lose interest in participating.

Our goal is that, through the use of creative speaking workshops, students become interested in the subject and motivated to participate on the class. Through the application of certain principles of creative writing on the workshops we propose we aim to obtain a development on the oral skills. Thus, they will leave aside other feelings that can produce unwillingness to communicate and, through practice, will end up getting an improvement in their Communicative Competence, fluency and accuracy.

To design the activities we have taken into consideration certain aspects that make them more interesting for the students. First and foremost, we have tried to include the use of ICT tools in all of the activities. This is not only because we want students to become familiar with these resources, but also so that they move from being simply consumers of content and get closer to being able to produce

new materials. In addition, we have used on three principles to make the activities appealing: talk about their personal experiences (act 1), simulate certain dynamics that can be seen in social networks (act 2 and 4), and use games or aspects that usually appear on television to promote fun in the class (act 3).

Besides, it must be noted that the level of difficulty is increased as the activities are developed. The activities are designed in a way that, by the end of the course, students' overall skills and creativity are greater. Therefore they are expected to be able to perform adequately even if the level of difficulty is higher.

The project has been designed bearing in mind the Spanish Educational Law (LOMCE) and the Decree that establishes the curriculum in Secondary Education in La Rioja. According to the Decree, the contents that will be included on the creative speaking workshops are:

#### **BLOCK II. Oral production: expression and interaction**

- Makes brief presentations, well structured, previously practised, and with visual support (e.g. PowerPoint), on specific aspects of academic or occupational topics of interest, organizing the basic information in a coherent manner, explaining the main ideas briefly and clearly and answering simple questions asked by the listeners and articulated clearly and at medium speed.
- Manages adequately every day and less common situations that may arise during a trip or stay in other countries for personal, educational or occupational reasons (transport, accommodation, meals, shopping, studies, work, relations with the authorities, health, leisure), and knows how to request attention, information, help or explanations, and make a claim or a formal process in a simple but correct way and according to the context.
- Participates adequately in informal conversations, face to face or on the telephone or by other technical means, on every day or less usual matters, in which exchanges information and expresses and briefly justifies opinions and points of view; tells and describes in a coherent way facts that happened in the past or real or invented future plans; formulates hypothesis; makes suggestions; asks and gives directions or instructions in some detail; expresses and justifies feelings, and describes concrete and abstract aspects of topics such as, for example, music, cinema, literature or current affairs.
- Takes part in formal conversations, interviews and meetings of an academic or occupational nature, on common topics in these contexts, exchanging pertinent information on concrete facts, asking and giving instructions or solutions to practical problems, raising points of view in a simple and clear way, and reasoning and explaining briefly and coherently actions, opinions and plans.

## 4.2 Participants

This project is aimed at a 4<sup>th</sup> ESO classroom. Within the different courses on the Spanish Educational Law (*LOMCE*), we have considered the last year of Compulsory Secondary Education (*ESO*) to be the most suitable for the project for several reasons.

Given that it is a considerably high level of instruction, students should already know up to a certain degree sufficient vocabulary and structures so that they can communicate their ideas adequately. We are aware that their actual level of expertise may vary, so the level of the difficulty of the activities could be adjusted. We consider that, through the use of this method, students will be able to express themselves without difficulties, develop their Communicative Competence and improve their overall skills on the language. In addition, the feeling that students may have considering instruction to be repetitive and unappealing will be avoided.

On the other hand, at this level the cognitive maturity of the students is more developed. In younger learners, abilities such as critical or abstract thinking are more restricted. However, learners of a certain age are more able to detect their own mistakes, become aware of the current knowledge and regulate their own self-learning process. Hence, during this stage students are not only able to achieve an actual improvement on their language skills but also they are prepared to formulate their own ideas appropriately.

Last but not least, students as they are more mature, will become more responsible with their own learning process. They will be willing to take greater responsibilities, manage their own efforts and practice actively on the class. For this reason, their willingness to participate if presented to the right conditions on the class and their attitudinal behaviour will be adequate. Positive feedback and emphasis on the fact that, regarding creativity, all ideas are valid reinforce this type of behaviours.

Therefore, students' age is expected to range from 14 to 16 years old, bearing in mind that some students might be repeating grades or may have done it in the past.

### **4.3 Attention to Diversity**

In accordance with Order 6/2014 by the Consejería de Educación Cultura y Turismo, educational centres supported by public funds in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja have to develop a Plan for Attention to Diversity.

Within this project, we believe that it can fit perfectly with the plan of the centre in which it is to be developed as well as with the particular needs of each student. We seek to create a workflow, collaborative and stress-free environment in which students do not feel pressured and can work according to their abilities. Those students with higher capacities would be able to express themselves freely, using their full potential. On the contrary, students who may find difficulties are provided with extra support and are encouraged to continue in their improvement process.

In addition, regarding creativity and as it has been already mentioned, we will take into account that some people have a natural tendency to think in a more creative way than others. Not all students are equal nor they possess the same capabilities, therefore not all of them are expected to perform at the same level. The difficulty of the activities can be graded and adjusted.

Another type of strategies to use are cooperative learning methods, self-learning, flexibility in the use of spaces and time, or selecting different materials and activities. These and other actions could be taken provided they are implemented reflexively and in accordance with the established in the law.

### **4.4 Methodology**

In order to promote students' oral skills, a certain variety of methodological strategies is used in this innovation proposal. The workshops that we propose within this project blend three different methodologies: the Communicative Approach, Flipped Classroom y Gamification. However, it should be stressed that this project could be included complemented with other approaches that the teachers might use to teach speaking or any of the other skills.

The communicative approach is undoubtedly the one that predominates in our proposal. The aim of our project is not only to teach students how to speak correctly, fluently or accurately. We want students to be able to use their minds, avoid pre-fabricated language and express their own ideas. Within the communicative approach, students learn how to effectively use language in real

communication; they will acquire the necessary strategies and know how to apply them in real-life situation.

Flipped-learning could also have a great potential if used within the project. Students are introduced to new contents outside and before the scheduled class time so that, during the class, time is available for working actively and providing feedback. We consider that, by giving students materials they can work with beforehand, they will feel more secure, prepared and motivated during the next session. In addition, other skills would be improved additionally since the materials provided to the students could be written texts or audio-visual materials and they can practice beforehand, whether orally or by writing.

Finally, we have decided to include certain Gamification principles in our project, as we consider they could enhance the learning outcomes. It can be used to boost students' engagement, enjoyment and also loyalty, thus obtaining a significant positive impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the workshops.

#### **4.5 Timing**

The creative speaking workshops are hold once every two units; therefore, four workshops are conducted during the course (as one academic year is usually divided into eight-nine units). Foreseeably, two of the workshops are developed during the first term given that it is longer. Afterwards, only one workshop is developed on each of the other two terms. In so doing, students have a considerable amount of new contents they can use to express themselves.

The content and topic of the Workshops can be adjusted to what has been discussed in the units if the teacher considers it appropriate. In such a way, students can benefit from the Workshops consolidating the contents and practicing for a better understanding.

The workshops will be developed during complete sessions, so that the workflow environment and the positive energy needed for its functioning can be fully exploited. Depending on the size of the class, we consider that each time they are carried out they should have a duration of at least two sessions.

We believe, that if students have never worked in this way before, an introduction to creative writing may be necessary. At the beginning of the course, during one or two sessions, the new work methodology could be introduced to



them by practising first with some of the principles of creative writing so that they will be more familiar with the concept. This could improve the final results of the creative speaking workshops. Otherwise students cannot dispose of sufficient time to work effectively.

We consider that, if the results are positive, their frequency could be increased, provided that this is not detrimental to the equal development of the other skills.

#### **4.6 Competences**

The creative speaking workshops (and the whole syllabus of the course in which they will be included) have been designed under the competency-based learning approach promoted by the Spanish Educational Law (*LOMCE*). Competences, as defined by the Spanish Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte (2015, pp. 6986), include "a combination of practical skills, knowledge, motivation, ethical values, attitudes, emotions, and other social and behavioural components that are mobilised together to achieve effective action." Through them, students develop the capacity to effectively solve complex challenges.

Besides the Key Competences that the Spanish Educational Law establishes, throughout the Workshops students will be able to enhance others such as:

- Communicative Competence: in an EFL Classroom, importance should be given to understand the linguistic structures of the language together with other communicative components. Language is much more than a set of structures and lists of words and students should be encouraged to use it actively in order to master it. It is important to create a need on them and to motivate them to participate in the class. This is the only way in which students acquire the know-how they need in their daily life and in other contexts and situations they will face.

- Intercultural Communicative Competence: "the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges, and opportunities that are presented by a given type of context." (Council of Europe, 2016). We think it is important to include this competence in our syllabus so that students can understand, respect and value other cultures and points of view. In the interconnected and multicultural world that we live, it is important to educate citizens so that we can all live together in peace.

- Creativity: through the use of activities that result both enjoyable and fruitful for the students, our aim is to engage students on the class so that they will practise actively and develop their full potential. Students are encouraged to think outside the box and express their own ideas. We want students to lose the fear of making mistakes and have fun while they work, an attitude that they will be able to use during the rest of their development.

#### **4.7 Activities**

In the following charts, we describe the activities that we propose as part of the creative speaking workshops. They have been designed following the principles described above and they seek to promote the use of ICT resources. Other more or less complex activities could be included on the syllabus depending on the capacities or response of the group.

According to Coto (2002), students feel more motivated to participate in the class if the topics they are required to work with are meaningful for them. For this reason, and also with the purpose of getting students ready to produce their own high-quality contents, the activities are related with social networks and ICT tools. Given the trend among young people of investing such a great part of their time on platforms such as *Youtube*, *Instagram* or *Facebook*, we have included aspects of these networks to increase students' interest on the activities. We do not work directly with them in the workshops but certain formats or topic are emulated. We begin with an activity in which they are encouraged share random aspects of their lives with their classmates and we gradually progress to activities with a higher level of abstraction.

Before the activities begin, it is recommended to introduce them in detail to the students. It is important to make the objectives we pursue clear as well as the principles that define the project. If this is not done properly, possibly students will not understand this methodology and therefore its effects will be reduced. In addition, students should be told how the evaluation is and what parameters are taken into account. This is important since certain aspects that are not normally considered in the evaluation of oral exercises are assessed within our project; such as students' attitude, their creativity or even their posture. Within the Communicative Approach, it is important to control certain paralinguistic aspects

that undoubtedly influence the communicative act and determine its degree of success. Therefore, to a certain extent, we also include them in the evaluation of students. A detailed explanation on how to communicate effectively could be included before the workshops take place and could be beneficial for the students overall Communicative Competence.

In the same way, this new methodology could be introduced through creative writing exercises. This could be beneficial for students as they will understand the objective of the workshops better and will get used to this new way of working. Some of the activities proposed by Hadfield and Hadfield (1990) or by Coto (2002) could be used as an introduction.

#### *4.7.1. Activity 1: Speak Up Dices*

ACTIVITY 1: Speak Up Dices	
Description	
<p>Our goal in this activity is to introduce them to this new way of working and motivate their in-class participation through the use of game-like mechanisms. Through this activity students use different discursive-syntactic contents; such as the use of English Verb Tenses (Past, Present and Future tenses) and the expression of time, quantity and space. The game consists of different tasks that students are required to fulfil throughout the two sessions into which the activity is divided.</p> <p>- Session 1: students are divided into homogeneous groups of five people in order to take part on the first stage of the activity. The groups receive a dice in which each number is associated with a different category: 1- The name of a person; 2- An object; 3- A place; 4- A number; 5- A date; 6- A random word (see Appendix 8.1). In turn, each student has to roll the dice in order to obtain a category and, within it, the rest of the group has to choose the specific word. That specific word, called prompt, is the one that the student who has rolled the dice has to use to make a one minute long oral composition. The prompt must be included on the composition at least once. In their turn they are required to use that word to tell a short and original story, related to any topic they want. Each student has to roll the dice a minimum of four times. While the activity is being performed by the students, the teacher works simply as a guide for them,</p>	

providing them the help they may need at any time and encouraging them to redirect their category to share original information. Students self-assess themselves during the initial stage of the activity. According to three parameters (creativity, attitude and correctness), the group can evaluate each member's performance. Students can obtain a maximum of 5 points.

Once they have all completed their turns, each student has to recall the prompts they have been given and use them to make a more elaborate composition. This is the starting point of the second session.

- Session 2: the class is not divided in groups anymore, students work individually. Depending on the interests or skills observed in the previous class, the categories of the dice could be changed to more or less concrete ones (for instance: a gadget or a black object). The activity works in a similar way, since the students get a new prompt by throwing the dice, although now they are the ones who have to choose the specific word within the obtained category. The difficulty is increased since they must recover those prompts with which they worked in the previous class and make a composition of one or two minutes in front of their colleagues. Each student participates once and now it is the teacher the one who evaluates the activity according to the assessment rubric. In addition, the best compositions can be awarded with extra points at the end of the class, with the students here deciding.

For extra practice, the teacher can provide the resource used to create the dices to the students (<https://www.toolsforeducators.com/dice/>).

Methodology	Grouping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gamification</li> <li>- Communicative Approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Heterogeneous groups of five students</li> <li>- Individual work</li> </ul>
Duration	Resources
Two sessions of 50'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dices</li> <li>- Cardboards</li> <li>- Computer – Internet</li> </ul>

#### 4.7.2. Activity 2: Alternative Life Hacks

##### ACTIVITY 2: Alternative Life Hacks

###### Description

In this activity, students work with a familiar format to them as it is quite popular in social media. This format is used to encourage students to think outside the box and reach imaginative outcomes. During the activity, students think of alternative uses for different objects. This activity students enables students to use different discursive-syntactic contents; such as the use of English Verb Tenses (Conditional Tenses) and the expressions of possibility, probability, capability and intention (Modal Verbs).

Before the session begins, there is a flipped session with several tasks that they have to complete as homework. Students receive the material that they have to use to prepare the class. It consists in a video of Life Hacks by the *Youtube* channel *Buzzfeed NIFTY* (see Appendix 8.2). Students receive information about how to reuse old clothes in other ways than their more traditional use. They have to think about the topic and prepare a list with five objects and their alternative uses. They are not explained beforehand how the next session is conducted, but they are encouraged to be as inventive as possible with the objects and their uses.

At the beginning of the first session, students must hand in their lists and the teacher gives them five cards they must complete (see Appendix 8.2). They have to write the English word for the object on one side of the card and on the other side the definition of the object. The cards must be ready in ten minutes. If they haven't done the homework already, students are encouraged to think about the most original objects they can. Dictionaries, online resources and even the teacher's help are available during the session. However, not having prepared them at home will have a negative impact on their marks.

All the cards are stored in a box and, randomly, students have to extract one and think about a use for the object. In addition to inviting them to participate, creative thinking is promoted. Each shift lasts a minute and a half and is divided into two parts: firstly, the student who has taken the card thinks about an alternative use and shares it with the class; Afterwards, the card's author shares the original use he/she had thought of. Students vote to decide which

of the two participants wins the point, taking into account the originality and verisimilitude.

At no time the lack of knowledge of the word in question is penalized, but the lack of reaction or imagination is. The activity is evaluated by the teacher according to the assessment criteria. Extra points are awarded to most original objects and alternative uses.

Methodology	Grouping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicative Approach</li> <li>- Gamification</li> <li>- Flipped Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual Work</li> </ul>
Duration	Resources
Two sessions: session 1 (Flipped session) and session 2 (in class work)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Computers – Internet</li> <li>- Dictionaries</li> <li>- Cards</li> <li>- An opaque box</li> </ul>

#### 4.7.3. Activity 3: Storytelling Pop-up Prompts

ACTIVITY 3: Storytelling Pop-up Prompts
Description
<p>During the third activity, students act as storytellers inventing their own narration and including on their oral performance certain words that appear randomly on the screen. Through this activity students use different discursive-syntactic contents; such as the use of English Verb Tenses (Narrative Tenses, Mixed Tenses, Reported Speech, and Passive Sentences) and linkers (conjunction, disjunction, comparison, condition, and result).</p> <p>As a preparation for the activity, students are informed beforehand on what it consists and how they can work to get ready for the next sessions. In order to prepare the activity, during the final part of the previous session, students are introduced in general terms to it. With the purpose of explaining how the activity works, the teacher provides an example on how students will be required to act and provides them with basic information on this format and its structure. Besides, students are encouraged to, as homework, to think about different words (terms, objects, adjectives, verbs, verb tenses, grammatical structures,</p>

etc.) that could be used for storytelling.

To prepare the prompts images are necessary, so they can look for them on the internet or even take pictures themselves in which the word they have chosen can be seen. The prompts are created using the website *Goconqr* (<https://www.goconqr.com/>); the teacher will demonstrate the students how to use this resource beforehand. Under the image, students have to write the noun in English for the object. This part of the task is not mandatory, as the teacher prepares the prompts for the next session. However, participation is appreciated and could be rewarded with extra points. Students are provided the resource and encouraged to use it to create their own materials. The prompts created must be sent to the teacher with sufficient time before the class is to be held, as they will have to be supervised and corrected if necessary.

Because of an average class comprises 25 students, the activity is developed during two sessions. Each student is provided sufficient time to perform in the activity consisting each turn of three to four minutes. Students are challenged to tell stories in which they will have to include as many of these words as they can. The prompts include some of the words they have already learned during the course as well as other terms that students can use to invent original stories. They do not know the words in advance; the prompts are projected on the screen randomly (see Appendix 8.3). Using their creativity, they will have to find a way to link each word within their story in order to receive a new word.

Those students who are able to use more words, obtaining stories with a certain conductive and original thread, will receive a higher score. The activity is evaluated by the teacher according to the assessment criteria. Extra points are awarded to most original performances.

Methodology	Grouping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Gamification</li><li>- Communicative Approach</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Individual Work</li></ul>
Duration	Resources
Two sessions of 50'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Computers – Internet</li><li>- Camera – Mobile Phone</li><li>- Projector – Screen</li></ul>

#### 4.7.4. Activity 4: Famous for one day

##### ACTIVITY 4: Famous for one day

###### Description

The final activity is the one with the greatest level of difficulty and also the most communicative one. As the course is almost finished when this activity is developed, students are able to use the oral skills they have developed as well as their creativity to produce a longer act of speech. This activity consists in the use of role-play with the purpose of posing and answering questions. The syntactic discursive contents that students practise through the activity include: Verb tenses (Reported Speech, Affirmative Sentences, Negative Sentences, Questions and aspect expression (punctual, durative and habitual).

Again, so that they can prepare the class and get an idea of what it is like, students receive materials with which they can work. They will be sent different videos of *YouTubers*, Influencers, or famous international people in which they answer questions that their followers have asked them. Some examples of these videos can be found on Appendix 8.4. We have selected videos of people from different backgrounds that talk about different topics (an American influencer, a Greek *Youtuber* and activist and a British actor).

- Session 1: students will work in pairs with the goal of getting ready to imitate this format. In the first part of the session, each pair receives two pictures of famous people, one for each student. Student A receives the picture of famous person A and has to think of questions for famous person B (represented by student B) and also how to respond to the possible questions that student B might pose. Student B works in the same way with their respective materials. They should embody that famous person and think of how they would answer to such questions. If they do not know anything about them, they can invent fictitious information. Therefore, students see both pictures but work individually during the first stage.

The second stage of the first session consists of 30 minutes and it is destined for the students to practice. They have to ask and answer some of the questions. Besides, they are encouraged to take notes, as during the second session they have to recall some of the information.



- Session 2: in this session, students share with the class their most original outcomes. Individually, they share the most original question they were asked and their answer to it by mean of a reported speech formula. Students are evaluated according to the assessment criteria. Before the workshop ends, students are encouraged to share the most original answers and questions they have posed. The activity is evaluated by the teacher according to the assessment criteria. Extra points are awarded to most original performances.

<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Grouping</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flipped Learning</li> <li>- Gamification</li> <li>- Communicative Approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pairs</li> <li>- Individual work</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Two sessions of 50' and a Flipped session at home	- Computers – Internet

#### **4.8 Evaluation**

The evaluation procedure of the creative speaking workshops is conducted according to the same principles we have used for the design of the workshops. First and foremost, it is important to bear in mind that the evaluation is both formative and summative. During the whole process, the teacher acts as a guide for the students and provides them instruction so that they can improve throughout the development of the activities.

As our main aim is to design a workflow and communicative environment, most of the features that Hummel (2014) and Sánchez Reyes (2011) propose within Communicative Language Teaching are taken into consideration for the evaluation of the project. The main objective is to maintain learners engaged in the class and avoid the fear of making mistakes they might feel; for this reason fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary aspects. Evaluation is not only restricted to grammatical or linguistic notions, but other aspects such as motivation, creativity, behaviour or students' posture are stressed. The rubric comprises the aspects that are evaluated and is introduced to the students beforehand.

Therefore, the class is redesigned. Our main objective is to obtain a learner-

centred classroom is which students are able to act more autonomously and become the owners of their learning process. As they feel less pressured and anxious, the fear of making mistakes is diminished and their Willingness to Communicate is not compromised.

Students' performance is evaluated according to the parameters indicated on the assessment rubric (see Appendix 8.5). As the activities are developed, the teacher takes note on the students' performance and those notes are used afterwards for the evaluation according to the rubric. All the activities are evaluated using the same rubric

The rubric defines those aspects that are evaluated within the workshops. It includes the following categories: creativity, behaviour, correctness and posture. Except for their posture, each category is stressed equally within the rubric. Fluency and accuracy (correctness) are still given importance in the evaluation, but not as much as they usually are. The total mark that students can achieve is 100 points.

The student's mark for project is obtained by calculating the average score for the four activities. Each one of the four activities therefore represents a 25% of the mark for the project.

Within the final grade for the subject, the mark for the project is taken into account. The project constitutes a 50% of the final mark that students obtain in the speaking skills. Depending on the assessment criteria of the subject, the project could constitute up to a 12.5% of the final mark (providing that the four skills are given the same importance).

We consider it is important for the project adequate development to be given a considerable importance on the final mark. This can help to boost students' motivation. As the workshops can be perceived as highly demanding, students will probably expect a "reward" for their efforts and participation. From our point of view this is beneficial as if students participate actively they will achieve a greater improvement and therefore this should be reflected on their marks.

What is more, certain Gamification techniques are used in order to boost creative thinking. As we have stated during the description of the activities, thinking outside the box is rewarded with points for the students; for instance when their idea has not been mentioned previously or when they share their good

results with their partners. Those points could be exchanged for certain benefits such as being able to not answer a certain question in their final test, being able to choose an activity to do in the class or being able to choose a topic to work with during the class.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

Within this project, we have designed creative speaking workshops that foster also their ability to communicate, as they are encouraged to think outside the box and share their own ideas.

The workshops have been designed with the purpose of creating a positive and anxiety-free environment in which students feel free to participate and adopt an active role during the class. This results in a reinforcement of students' confidence and an increase of their participation and motivation, as they feel less pressured and judged during their performance. As Willingness to Communicate is increased, their acts of speech are more frequent and, through practice, they become more accurate and fluent. Besides, the workshops include topics that students can relate to with the purpose of inviting them to participate; such as sharing aspects of their real lives with their colleagues or emulating certain formats that are popular on social networks. The topics have been selected including a certain range of cultural aspects such as experiences from people of different background or different traditions that students can share with their colleagues. This has been included in the project with the purpose of expanding students' Intercultural Communicative Competence, as we consider English to be a good vehicle for this purpose.

We used the experiences of other authors who have previously worked in a similar way as a basis to design our project. We have collected experiences from authors such as Singleton (2001), Coto (2002), Khameis (2006) or Avila (2015) among others. The results they obtained were positive both in relation to the learning and participation of the students. However, all the experiences that we have encountered were designed for elementary levels in which students are thought to be more inventive and imaginative.

From our point of view, this way of working could and should be used to foster the skills in higher levels in which students are capable of expressing their own ideas and should be encouraged to explore them. For this reason, and since we firmly believe on the great potential of this methodology, we have reinvented it and redesigned activities to motivate older and more knowledgeable students.

Creative writing activities have been widely used in different countries and satisfactory results have been obtained. Creative speaking on the contrary has

yet to be further explored and used. It is a refreshing point of view that, if correctly included on the syllabuses, has a great potential in improving students' learning outcomes.

Despite our proposal has been designed according to the students' capacities and using innovative methodologies and ICT tools, certain limitations could appear during its implementation.

One of the elements that could be detrimental if not taken into consideration is the students per class ratio. As every student has different needs and paces of learning, if the class is too large the teaching quality will be compromised. Therefore, we recommend to implement this project in classes with a moderate ratio, with no more than 24-25 students per class. The teacher needs to be able to assess each student individually and provide them with the guidance they might need, something that becomes more difficult if the class is too large. Another possible solution for this potential problem could be to destine more time and sessions to develop the project appropriately.

The characteristics of the centre are also significant for the implementation of the project. It is designed for its implementation on centres in La Rioja Region, however this is not a required condition for its development as it could be adapted to other regions. All in all, the centre's facilities and equipment could have an impact on the success of the project, since it should be equipped with the necessary facilities and media. The required resources are not too specific, this project only requires audio-visual facilities (such as computers and projectors), Internet connexion, printed materials, and/or a traditional blackboard. If the centre does not possess these resources, certain modifications could be included in order to redesign the activities and adjust the, to the centre's characteristics.

Regarding the students' possible lack of resources, we consider that it is something that could easily be solved. Since students are not really required to do much online work at home, other resources could be offered to those who do not have an Internet connexion at home: they could use the centre's computers, their local library or even receive certain materials on a USB memory stick.

It is important to bear in mind the importance of preparing at home the activities that need previous work. If at home work is mandatory (as in Activity 2), not having prepared the homework will have a negative impact on their marks and

students are provided with some time to complete the task in class. However, during this time they will work individually as otherwise they can slow down class development. If at home work is optional (as in Activity 3), students could be awarded with extra points in order to motivate their participation.

Another possible problem may be the emergence of conflicts between students. During some of the activities, students will have to work collaboratively in groups, couples, and as a whole group. At all times, the teacher will be responsible for designing the workgroups, with the aim of obtaining heterogeneous groups. We consider that it is important that they learn to work both independently and collaboratively and with that objective the two formats have been introduced in the workshops. The environment we have designed for the activities is friendly and collaborative; therefore students are encouraged to work one with each other and learn from their peers. In this way, the learning outcomes are increased. In addition, this aspect is included in the evaluation of the students to avoid that a negative attitude hinders the development of the class. Besides, although the evaluation includes parameters that measure the correctness of students' performance, lack of knowledge is not severely penalised. For instance, if one student does not know one of the words some of the other have included on the prompts, they are not penalised and are provided the Spanish term so that they can learn that new word.

For the arguments hereby enclosed, we have every reason to believe on the great potential on improving students' oral productive skills. Although possible sources of problems may appear during its implementation, we do believe that the project can be redesigned and slightly adjusted to reach even greater outcomes.



## **6. CONCLUSION**

The present innovative project is devoted to explore the application of certain creative writing principles into the development of the oral productive skills. Taking into account the fact that creative writing workshops are very popular nowadays and its multiple benefits are defended by a wide range of teachers and researches, our objective has been to use them to increase not only students' ability to express themselves but also their ability to communicate with each other.

First and foremost, we have conducted an investigation in how other authors have already used creativity to promote the productive skills. As we have found little information on creative speaking, some of the main principles of creative writing have been taken into consideration as the basis of the project.

Besides, as we think that education nowadays needs to prepare students for the ever-changing and interconnected world, certain key abilities should be included. English should be considered as one of these basic competences, as today is a Lingua Franca. For a correct use of the language, much more than a certain mastery on the four traditional skills is required. Other competences such as the ability to communicate effectively or the Intercultural Communicative Competence have a great impact and are therefore included.

On the other hand, it is important to take into consideration that for a communicative act to be adequate a desire to communicate is needed. We have explored the concept of Willingness to Communicate and included it during the design and evaluation of the proposal.

Our proposal consists of four creative speaking workshops that take place during an academic year on a 4<sup>th</sup> ESO classroom. They have been designed according to these basic skills and, in order to obtain an improvement during its development, their difficulty is increased gradually. Within this scope, several theoretical approaches have been merged in order to obtain different learning outcomes. More precisely, we have used the Communicative Approach, Flipped Learning and Gamification. A great use of ICT tools is included on the workshops, both to motivate students' participation and their ability to manage those resources. Furthermore, we want students not only to be capable of using those tools receptively but also to produce content themselves.



Withal, we would like to highlight the learning outcomes obtained throughout the design and programming of this innovative project. As it has already been stated above, we consider education to be an ongoing improvement process in which teachers, investigators and other agents should take part. It is part of the teacher's responsibility to reflect on their practices and dare to be innovative with the purpose of improving the results obtained. At all times this has been our objective during the creation and development of the present project. We have conducted an investigation on certain aspects that could be enhanced and explored innovative courses of action, some of which are not commonly used nowadays.

All in all, the union of these approaches and elements have resulted in an innovative project that could be applicable in the EFL classroom and bring very positive results. We would like to encourage other professionals on the field to implement and even further develop this way of working.

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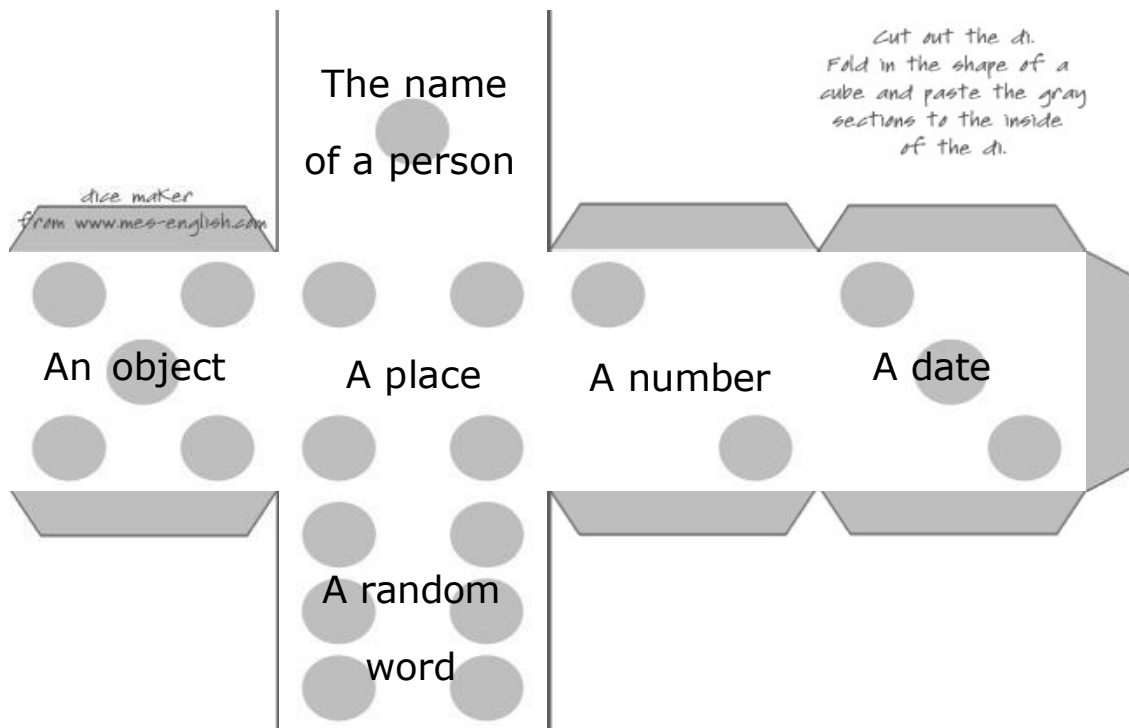
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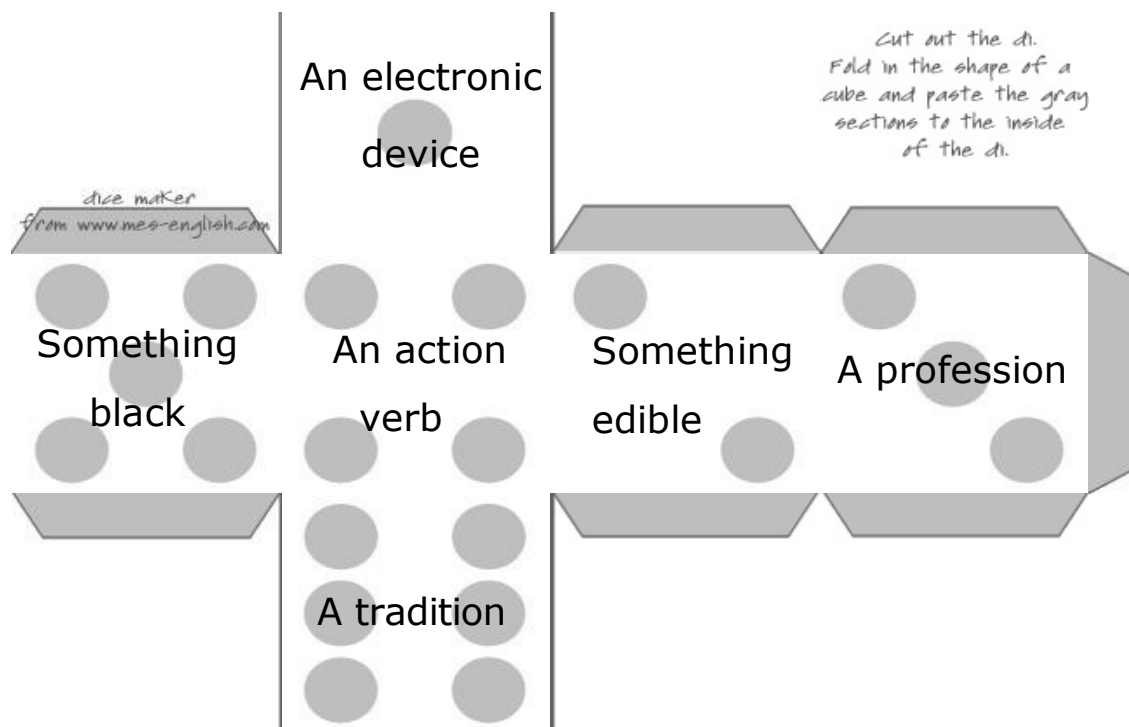
## 8. APPENDICES

### 8.1 Speak Up dices: materials

#### - Session 1



#### - Session 2





## 8.2 Alternative Life Hacks: materials

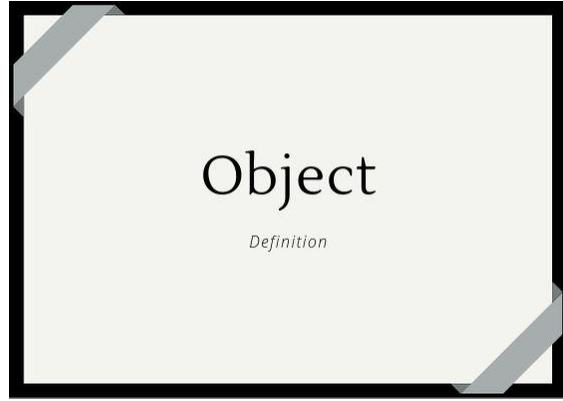
### 1) Example of a Life Hacks video

Audio Network [Buzzfeed Nifty]. (2019, april 7). 8 Genius Hacks To Reuse Old Clothes [Video file]. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8aoP1soi9M>

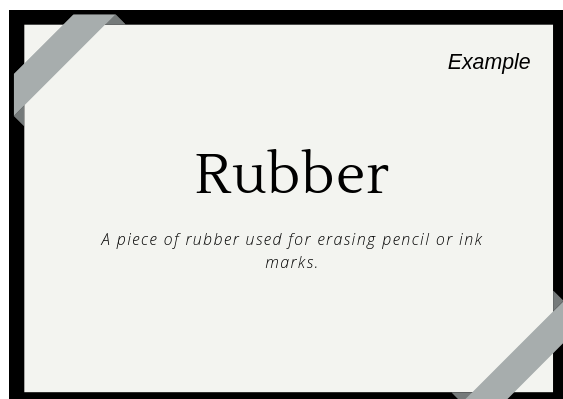


2) Example of the cards that are handed to the students. Five empty cards are handed in to the students and they are required to complete them.

- CARD A (*Card to be completed*)



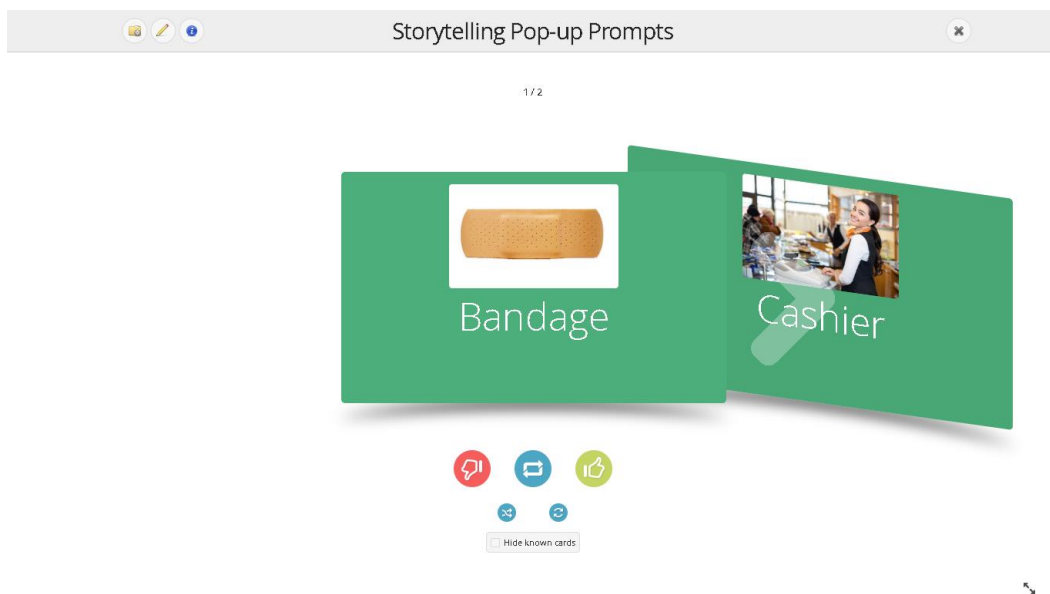
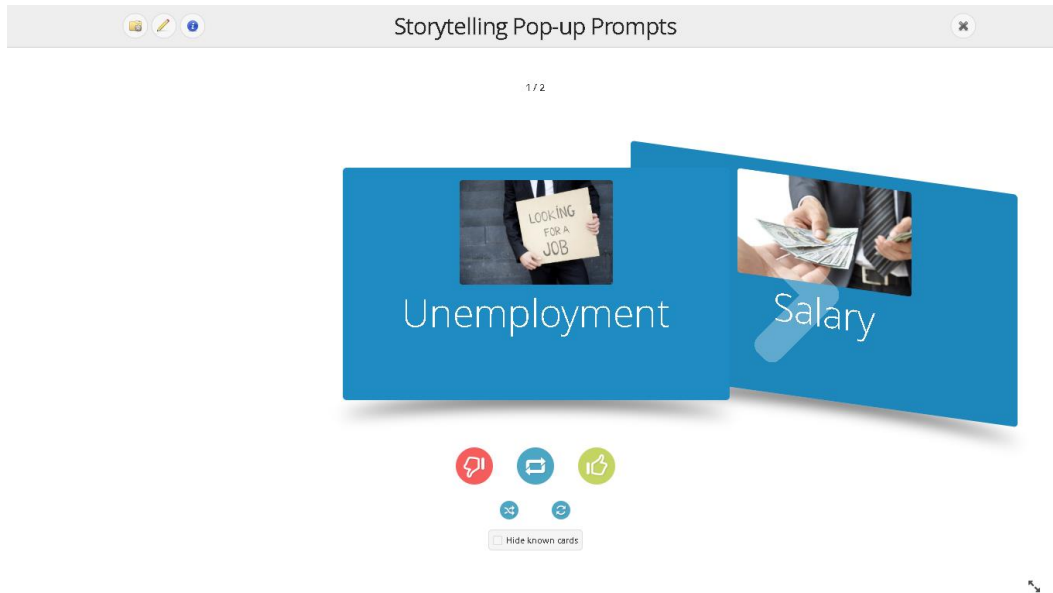
- CARD B (*Example of a card*)



### 8.3 Storytelling Pop-up Prompts: Materials

Screen capture of the website is used both to create and project the prompts in the class (GoConqr).

Examtime Ltd. (2019). GoConqr. Retrieved from: <https://www.goconqr.com/>



#### 8.4 Famous for one day: Materials

Screen captures and references of sample videos for activity 4 based on different profiles of famous people.

Kylie Jenner [Kylie Jenner]. (2019, june 18). Sister Q&A – Khloé and Kylie [Video file]. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVozHwrcsM4>



Kristen Leo [Kristen Leo]. (2017, september 27). Helping Friend Go Vegan, Getting Married? Q&A [Video file]. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5KdePfqj9I&t=122s>



### Helping Friends Go Vegan, Getting Married? Q&A

18.368 visualizaciones

👍 911    💬 14    ➦ COMPARTIR    📌 GUARDAR    ...



**Kristen Leo**

Publicado el 27 sept. 2017

SUSCRIBIRSE 262 MIL

Daniel Radcliffe [Wired]. (2019, february 7). Daniel Radcliffe Answers the Web's Most Searched Questions [Video file]. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubNmT8FzHLo&t=44s>



### Daniel Radcliffe Answers the Web's Most Searched Questions | WIRED

9.612.745 visualizaciones

👍 369 MIL    💬 3 MIL    ➦ COMPARTIR    📌 GUARDAR    ...



**WIRED** ✓

Publicado el 7 feb. 2019

SUSCRIBIRSE 4,6 M

## 8.5. Assessment Rubric

Rubric	3. Proficient	2. Apprentice	1. Novice	100
<b>1. Creativity</b>				<b>/ 30</b>
1.1 Ideas	Formulates original ideas freely. Thinks outside the box and reaches imaginative outcomes.	Formulates ideas and tries to be original. Presents a certain lack of imagination.	Barely formulates new ideas. Lacks imagination and creativity. Little effort is shown.	/15
1.2 Topic	Understands the topic and stays on it. Prepares the class previously.	Shows basic knowledge on the task. Most assignments are completed.	Does not stay on topic. Does not complete assignments beforehand.	/15
<b>2. Behaviour</b>				<b>/30</b>
2.1 Attitude	Presents a positive attitude and a huge willingness to communicate.	Displays a positive attitude most part of the time.	Is reluctant to participate and presents a negative attitude.	/15
2.2 Contribution	Participates actively throughout the session. Is engaged and compromised.	Participates in most activities. Presents a certain lack of motivation.	Avoids class participation. Participates in class only when required.	/15
<b>3. Correctness</b>				<b>/30</b>
3.1 Accuracy	Presents a wide range of vocabulary, including complex words. Uses different structures and mistakes are scarce.	Shows a certain lack of complex vocabulary. Uses a variety of words and expressions. Occasional mistakes.	Uses only basic vocabulary and structures. Mistakes are frequent and important.	/15
3.2 Fluency	Speaks smoothly and at an adequate pace. Hesitation is scarce.	Speaks with some hesitation, but communication is not often interfered	Hesitates too often when speaking, communication is interfered	/15
<b>4. Posture</b>				<b>/10</b>
4.1 Posture	Speaks at an adequate voice tone. Makes eye contact and maintains it. Stands with an appropriate posture.	Speaks at an acceptable tone of voice most of the time. Eye contact is maintained frequently. Maintains a good posture.	Speaks at an inadequate voice tone. Stares at one person or avoids eye contact. Stands very rigid.	/10